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Message Text

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13
ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 EUR-25 NEA-14 IO-14 ISO-00 AF-10

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19

SCI-06 FEA-02 AEC-11 DRC-01 /207 W
---------- 086844
R 200748Z MAY 74
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3206
INFO AMCONSUL CAPETOWN
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USLO PEKING
USMISSION GENEVA

S E C R E T CANBERRA 3001

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TECH, IN, AS
SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN REACTION TO INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST

REF: STATE 104647

1. INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST MAY 18 HAS ATTRACTED MINIMAL ATTENTION
IN AUSTRALIA, DUE TO DISTRACTION OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS AND
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CLOSENESS OF CONTEST. FACT OF INDIAN TEST AND PAKISTANI

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REACTION THERETO HAS BEEN REPORTED IN MOST NEWSPAPERS. AUSTRALIAN COMMENTED EDITORIALLY MAY 20 THAT INDIAN TEST MAY LEAD TO NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, THOUGH IT TOOK NOTE OF INDIAN CLAIM THAT EXPLOSION IS FOR PEACEFUL USES. IT ALSO NOTED PAST AUSTRALIAN OPPOSITION TO FRENCH AND CHINESE TESTS BUT PREDICTED GOA WOULD TAKE NO ACTION.

2. DUE TO CLOSENESS AND UNCERTAIN OUTCOME OF AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS AND DUE TO PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM'S PRO-INDIAN ATTITUDES, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT GOA WILL REFRAIN FROM ANY ACTION ON INDIAN TEST, IN TERMS OF EITHER EXPRESSING DISPLEASURE OR ATTITUDES ON NPT AND OTHER DISARMAMENT ISSUES. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR GOA TO REMAIN SILENT ON THIS ISSUE. IT WILL BE PRESSED FOR ITS REACTION, AND SILENCE WILL EXPOSE GOA TO CHARGE OF MAINTAINING DOUBLE OR TRIPLE STANDARDS IN TERMS OF ITS EARLIER STATEMENTS ON FRENCH AND CHINESE TESTS. HENCE, IT IS PROBABLE THAT SOONER OR LATER GOA WILL FEEL IT NECESSARY TO EXPRESS AT LEAST REGRET OVER INDIAN TEST.

3. INDIAN TEST WILL NOT AFFECT AUSTRALIAN ATTITUDE ON NPT, SINCE LABOR GOVERNMENT RATIFIED TREATY IN EARLY 1973.

4. ONLY ONE AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL PARTY, DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY, HAS EVER EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. THIS PARTY ALL BUT EXTINGUISHED IN ELECTIONS MAY 18, AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS ISSUE IS SIMPLY NOT CURRENTLY BEFORE PUBLIC. AUSTRALIA HAS NO NUCLEAR-POWERED ELECTRICITY GENERATORS AT PRESENT, THOUGH IT MAY MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION AT SOME POINT IN FUTURE.
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